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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 10 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest attacks in the continuing campaign of Palestinian terrorism directed against the citizens of Israel.

This past Friday evening, 7 March, at approximately 8.40 p.m. (local time), two Palestinian terrorists, disguised as observant Jews and armed with automatic rifles and an explosive belt, infiltrated the community of Kiryat Arba. The first victims were a married couple taking a walk, both of whom were seriously wounded by gunfire. The terrorists then proceeded to a nearby building, where they broke into an apartment and killed Rabbi Eliahu Horowitz, age 52, and his wife Dina, age 50. At this point, a response unit arrived and engaged the terrorists in a gunfight lasting 30 minutes. A total of five other Israelis were wounded in the attack for which the terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility.

On Thursday, 6 March, Palestinian terrorists continued their rocket attacks on southern Israeli towns and villages. Three Kassam rockets, fired from Palestinian territory in the northern Gaza Strip, fell in the Negev town of Sderot, an area that has regularly come under rocket attack. On Sunday, 9 March, four more rockets hit Sderot. One of the rockets hit the concrete perimeter wall of a seminary on the outskirts of the town, a few metres from the local fire station. By sheer chance, no major injuries were reported. The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for these attacks as well.

In addition, Israeli security forces continue to thwart numerous attempted attacks. On Friday evening, Israeli soldiers prevented two Palestinian terrorists from infiltrating the community of Negohot. The terrorists were armed with assault rifles, grenades and an explosive belt, of the type used by suicide bombers. Yesterday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uncovered eight explosive devices of various sizes in the Palestinian village of Al-Yamoun; the explosives were detonated in a controlled manner. The IDF has also uncovered several large laboratories housing vast quantities of explosives.

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Israel continues to hold the Palestinian leadership responsible for the ongoing campaign of terrorism deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians, in light of its relentless incitement of its people to acts of violence, its direct support and active encouragement of terrorist acts and its ongoing failure to take any steps to fight terrorism and restore calm. Under international law, Security Council resolutions and signed commitments reached with Israel, the Palestinian leadership has an obligation to fight terrorism, end incitement and bring the perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice, none of which it has done. Instead, the Palestinian leadership has used its power and influence to support and encourage acts of violence and terrorism.

In such a climate, Israel is left with no choice but to exercise its right to self-defence and to take the necessary steps to protect its civilian population from the unrelenting threat of Palestinian terrorism. Israel calls upon the international community to utilize its power and influence to compel the Palestinian leadership to lay the groundwork for a resumption of negotiations by undertaking to fight terrorism, in accordance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Only the full rejection of terrorism, in both word and deed, will permit the conclusion of a lasting peace agreement, capable of satisfying the legitimate needs and aspirations of both sides.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Permanent Representative